

When this proposal was unveiled by the White House last summer, James Connaughton, the Chairman of President Bush's Council on Environmental Quality, gave the only frank description of the plan to come from the Administration. He said:

"[T]he best place to get commercial grade timber is in the context of these thinning projects. So why not go there? And that's really what this [initiative] is about."

So the "thinning" is simply a Trojan horse to allow massive commercial logging in our forests.

If we're serious about stopping the destructive fires that destroy homes and threaten lives, we need to focus on the borders between forests and populated areas. Clearcutting in isolated areas of our forests, as the bill allows, will not protect lives or property. The slash created by clearcutting undermines forest health and increases the risk of damaging wildfires.

The Miller Substitute focuses on where the greatest threat exists . . . the border between forests and population centers. At the same time, it preserves our ecologically valuable old growth forests. If wildfire prevention is the goal, then the Miller Substitute is the best way to get there. We need to defeat this bill and adopt the Miller substitute.

CONGRATULATING NICOLE
BORDALLO NELSON ON HER
GRADUATION FROM THE UNI-
VERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

HON. MADELINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2003

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Nicole Bordallo Nelson for completing her undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of San Francisco, for which commencement ceremonies will take place on May 24, 2003.

The Psychology Department at the University of San Francisco is a rigorous and highly regarded program. I am proud of Nicole for her tremendous achievement and for her hard work in order to earn this prestigious degree. However, it is her compassion for other people that is most commendable. Besides her many long hours of study and her hard work as a research assistant with the University of San Francisco Psychology Department, Nicole spent much of her free time volunteering for Bay Area homeless rescue missions. It is no surprise that she has excelled at the college level, and I have no doubt that she will continue to serve the community as she pursues a career in the Psychology.

Before college, Nicole attended the Academy of Our Lady of Guam, a Catholic school for young women on Guam, and later graduated from St. Paul's School. In addition to her coursework and hours of community service, she excelled as an athlete in soccer and basketball.

Today I join Nicole's parents, Deborah Josephine Bordallo and James Earl Nelson in congratulating Nicole on her accomplishment. They were always supportive and responsible parents to Nicole, their only daughter, and they have every reason to be proud of her achievement. But most of all, I want to thank

Nicole for making me one very proud grandmother. I know that her grandfather, the late Governor Ricky Bordallo, must be smiling down on her today. God bless you, Nicole, we love you.

COERCED STERILIZATION INVESTIGATED IN SLOVAKIA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on May 8, the Senate gave its consent to protocols providing for the accession of seven new members to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I have supported Slovakia's admission to NATO and am heartened that the post-1998 democratic and human rights progress in Slovakia made the Senate vote possible.

Slovak leaders continue to demonstrate in many concrete ways their commitment to the oft-cited but not always visible "shared values" that are central to the trans-Atlantic community. I was moved to read that several Slovak leaders, including Speaker of the Parliament, Pavol Hrusovsky, with whom I met last year, Laszlo Nagy, Chairman of the Parliament's human rights committee, and the Foreign Ministry have spoken out so clearly and strongly on behalf of the Cuban dissidents victimized by Castro's recent sweeping crackdown on human rights activists.

At the same time, I have continuing concerns about the Slovak Government's ongoing investigation into allegations that Romani women were sterilized without proper informed consent.

Mr. Speaker, I know these allegations are of concern to many members of the Helsinki Commission, one of whom recently sponsored a Capitol Hill briefing concerning the sterilizations. I also discussed the issue with Slovak Ambassador Martin Butora and Deputy Minister Ivan Korcok in March. Eight Helsinki Commissioners joined me in writing to Prime Minister Dzurinda to express our concern, and U.S. Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Democracy, and Labor, Lome Craner, commented on this abhorrent practice at his hearing on the State Department's annual human rights report.

I was encouraged by the Prime Minister's substantive and sympathetic response, and I commend his commitment to improve respect for the human rights of Slovakia's Romani minority.

At the same time, I am deeply troubled by one particular aspect of the government's response to the reports documenting that sterilizations occurred without proper informed consent.

Shortly after the release in January of a lengthy report on sterilization of Romani women, a spokesperson for the ministry responsible for human rights was quoted in The New York Times as saying: "If we confirm this information, we will expand our charges to the report's authors, that they knew about a crime for a year and did not report it to a prosecutor. And if we prove it is not true, they will be charged with spreading false information and damaging the good name of Slovakia."

In other words, if the government's investigation does not find evidence of coerced

sterilization, they intend to make those who dared make the allegation pay a price. And if the government's investigation does confirm the allegation, they will still make those who made the allegation pay a price. I believe this is what is meant by the old expression, "Damned if you do, and damned if you don't." This is really an outrageous threat, and it's hard to believe that an official responsible for human rights would have made it.

Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that this was an unfortunate misstatement and not really reflective of the Slovak Government's policies. I had hoped that the fact that almost every newspaper article, from Los Angeles to Moscow, about coerced sterilization in Slovakia has mentioned this threat would lead the Slovak Government to issue some kind of clarification or retraction. Unfortunately, not only has there been no such clarification or retraction, but the threat has now been repeated—not once, but at least twice.

First, in mid-March, the Ministry of Health issued a report based on its own investigation into the allegations. (A separate government investigation continues.) Naming a particular Slovak human rights advocate by name, the ministry complained that she had refused to cooperate with police investigators and this could be considered covering up a crime. Essentially the same point was made by Slovakia's Ambassador to the OSCE in early April, ironically during a meeting on Romani human rights issues.

Mr. Speaker, these threats raise serious doubts about the breadth and depth of the Slovak Government's commitment to get at the truth in this disturbing matter. Can the Slovak Government really expect women who may have been sterilized without consent to come forward and cooperate with an investigation with a threat like this hanging over them? A few brave souls may, but I believe these threats have had a substantial chilling effect on the investigative process.

In fact, it is not unusual for those whose rights have been violated to confide their stories only upon condition of anonymity. And while I realize there has been a very serious effort in Slovakia to improve the professionalism of the police and to address past police abuses against Roma, I certainly can't blame Romani women if they are unwilling to pour their hearts out to their local constables. Simply put, the police have not yet earned that trust.

I hope the Slovak Government will set the record straight on this and remove any doubt that the days when human rights activists could be sent to jail for their reports is over. Doing so is critical for the credibility of the government's ongoing investigation.

RECOGNITION OF ARDELL KIMMEL

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 21, 2003

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to recognize Ardell Kimmel of Jefferson County, Illinois. Ardell was recently inducted into the Senior Saints Hall of Fame of Jefferson County.

Ardell received this honor for his lifelong service to others. He served his country in